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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 30 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Palestinian death toll is mounting as a result of the ongoing indiscriminate and lethal military assaults being carried out by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of its brutal onslaught on Gaza, which started on 27 December 2008, more than 375 Palestinians, including children and women, have been killed by Israel, the occupying Power. Moreover, more than 1,750 Palestinians have been injured, many severely, and many will die from their injuries because of the dire situation facing the beleaguered hospitals in Gaza.

Despite the strong reaction to Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, and the reiteration of calls for an immediate ceasefire from all corners of the world to avert the dangerous spiralling of the situation on the ground, Israel persists in the escalation of its military assaults against the Gaza Strip, killing more Palestinians and further terrorizing the civilian population. As Israel, the occupying Power, launched airstrikes against the Gaza Strip for a fourth consecutive day, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called the bombardment "the first of several stages", suggesting that the onslaught against Gaza and its people was far from ending, and therefore repeating its rejection for an immediate ceasefire. The occupying Power, in fact, increased its number of warships along the Gaza shoreline and amassed more tanks and troops along the border.

Today, Israeli warplanes continued on with its airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, targeting civilian homes and properties, including a farm. In Beit Hanoun, a village in northern Gaza Strip, three Palestinian civilians were killed, including two sisters, Lama and Haya Hamdan, 4 and 11 years old respectively, as a result of a missile fired from an Israeli warplane. The four-year-old girl was killed instantly and her 11-year-old sister died en route to the hospital. Moreover, in addition to the death and destruction imposed on the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, an

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Israeli naval vessel rammed and shot at a boat with 16 medical volunteers aboard carrying 3.5 tons of medical aid to the Gaza Strip in international waters about 60 to 70 miles off Gaza.

Needless to say, the humanitarian situation has continued to drastically deteriorate as a result of the military attacks by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip who are already living in appalling conditions as a result of the 18-month Israeli siege on Gaza. Numerous international and aid organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) continue to call on Israel to ensure that medical supplies are delivered to those hit by the military attacks. In a statement released today, WHO called for the deliverance of essential and life-saving medicines without delay and warned, as many other aid organizations have over the past couple of days, that the inability of the hospitals to cope with a problem of this magnitude, if the situation continues unchanged, will result in a surge in preventable deaths from complications due to trauma.

International humanitarian law and human rights law were created for the purpose of protecting human life and dignity everywhere and preventing such reckless and condemnable attacks against civilians and their property. Regrettably, however, the occupying Power has never respected international law and continues to commit systematic violations and grave breaches of the law. The lethal military assaults carried out by the occupying forces by its aerial bombardments have not only caused massive human carnage and widespread destruction of property in the area, but have also left the entire civilian population in a state of fear, panic and trauma. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for such grave breaches of the law and cannot be allowed to continue to act with such flagrant and vicious impunity.

Moreover, we reiterate our call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to act immediately to help to bring about an immediate ceasefire and respect for international law. Tangible measures must be taken to address this crisis and to avert its further dangerous decline; to aid the Palestinian civilian population, including by providing them with the necessary protection and assistance to help them cope with the humanitarian crisis they are facing, including through compelling the occupying Power to ensure unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip; and to promote the calm needed to ultimately end this latest tragedy the Palestinian people are facing.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 325 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 29 December 2008 (A/ES-10/429-S/2008/828), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice (as all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine